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THE STORY
OF
JOSEPH
AND HIS BRETHREN,

SET FORTH IN
A PLEASING AND INSTRUCTIVE MANNER;

AND ADAPTED

To the capacities of Children.

BY JOSEPH SHARPLESS.

FRANKFORD, PENN.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

1812.

Joseph Rakestraw, printer.

DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, to wit.

BE it remembered, That on the first day of July, in the thirty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1812, Joseph Sharpless, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author; in the words following to wit:

"The Story of Joseph and his Brethren, set forth in a pleasing and instructive manner; and adapted to the capacities of Children. By Joseph Sharpless."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned." And also to the Act, entitled "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned." and extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the District of Pennsylvania.



PREFACE.

FEW subjects of history are more interesting and instructive, and scarcely any have attracted the attention of the public more generally, than the story of Joseph and his brethren: and though it has claimed the attention of able writers; some of whom have dressed it in a flowery style, and too much departed from the simple truth; while others have not done it justice, by being too concise; and not giving it that scope which the subject demands. I have endeavoured to steer between the two extremes, by giving a plain, simple narrative of facts, as contained in the scriptures; with such observations as occurred; tending to explain mysterious points, and to enforce the necessity of choosing the good, and refusing the evil, by the contrasted example of Joseph— and his brethren: showing that virtue is its own reward, and vice its own accuser. The

whole is laid down in a plain, intelligible manner, so as to meet the capacities of children, (for whom it is principally intended) and, at the same time to please and instruct them.

Though in some instances I have departed from the interesting story which is the subject of this little volume, it was to follow openings tending to improvement; which ought to be the principal object in all such performances: to mix instruction with amusement.

I shall now expose this little narrative to the view of the public, and should any defects appear, a friendly hint from any of my readers, tending to improve a second edition, will be kindly received.

J. S.

'THE STORY OF JOSEPH, &c.

Q. WHO made the world?

A. God.

Q. Who is God?

A. God is a Spirit; an Almighty Being, who inhabits eternity; without beginning, and without end. The bounds of his habitation are not fixed, but he is every where at the same time: though the heavens, or space above us, are supposed to be his habitation, yet he dwells within us, and teaches us to do right, and troubles our minds when we do wrong. He is the object of all true worship. By keeping our minds still, and attentive to the instructions of this great Being, and waiting upon him in silent adoration, we perform acceptable worship unto him.

As God is a Spirit, and perfect in himself, without beginning; he made the world, and all things therein; after he had made them, he pronounced them all to be good. Then he made man, of the dust of the earth, after

his own image, and called his name Adam. And having caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, he took one of his ribs, of which he made a woman, who was called Eve, who became Adam's wife. Their Almighty Maker assigned them a place of happiness, in the pleasant and fruitful garden of Eden; and gave them dominion over every living creature. He charged them to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

In the space of about fifteen hundred years, the descendants of Adam and Eve multiplied exceedingly, and became very wicked; on which account God destroyed them by a flood of water, all except Noah and his family; because "Noah was a just man, and walked with God." From him the earth was again peopled. About three hundred and fifty years after the flood, Abram (afterwards called Abraham) was born. To him the Lord promised, that he should be a father of many nations. Accordingly, God gave him a son, who was called Isaac; and Isaac was the father of Jacob, who was the father of

Joseph and his brethren ; of whom I am about to relate the following story.

Jacob had twelve sons, viz. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph and Benjamin ; and one daughter, Dinah.

The two youngest sons, Joseph and Benjamin, (but more especially Joseph) were particularly beloved by their aged father. " Joseph being seventeen years old, Israel," his father, " loved him more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age ; and (as a mark of distinction and respect) made him a coat of many colours."

This partiality of the father toward Joseph, raised in the minds of his brethren, a spirit of hatred and revenge ; and they waited, perhaps anxiously, for an opportunity of gratifying it.

It is a dreadful case when such a disposition of hatred and animosity takes place in the mind towards a fellow creature ; and more especially towards a brother or sister. Surely it is very wicked, and displeasing to the Lord. But on the contrary ; " How

good, and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren" and sisters, "to dwell together in" love and "unity." Oh! that all my young readers may think seriously of it; and banish from their minds the first appearance of an envious and jealous disposition.

Joseph's brethren were jealous, lest this partiality of their father should operate to their disadvantage; which, I apprehend, was not well founded; for his particular affection for Joseph was no mark of disrespect towards them: but when jealousy enters the mind, love departs, and many false imaginations and vain fears arise and disturb our peace, and beget hatred; and is sometimes carried even to murder; as would have been the case, in the story I am relating, had not Providence frustrated their wicked design. But true love shuts out all those evil propensities, and keeps the mind calm and affectionate; though others may be preferred before us, and may obtain what is our due, yet if we continue our love towards them, and treat them kindly, no doubt a blessing will attend us as it did Joseph.

Perhaps Jacob might have been a little in fault for showing partiality to one child more than another, (which I would have all parents to avoid) yet that was not a sufficient reason why his other sons should treat Joseph as they did.

What heightened their envy towards Joseph, was two dreams which he had ; denoting, that his condition in the world would be higher than theirs ; and even above his father and mother ; which came to pass accordingly.

Joseph very innocently, and without suspecting any danger thereby, related his dreams to his brethren, thus : I thought, in my dream, that "we were binding sheaves in the field ; and, lo, my sheaf arose and stood upright, and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance (or bowed down) to my sheaf." A very significant dream indeed ! and one might suppose, enough to have convinced Joseph's brethren of the divine origin of it ; and that God sent it for some special purpose.

In the days of Joseph, people had not the advantages that we have. The scriptures were not written; they had no such outward help, to instruct them in the way of the Lord; and therefore he sometimes made known his will by dreams and prophecies; and often showed the fulfilment of them by remarkable events. But, as I observed, Joseph's dream was a very remarkable one. "And my sheaf (says he) arose, and stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves made obeisance, or bowed down to my sheaf:" clearly importing a great change in their condition.

They seem to have understood the nature of this dream perfectly, by their exact interpretation of it. They answered Joseph, "shalt thou indeed reign over us? or have dominion over us?" But, instead of being humble, and fearing God, as Joseph's remarkable dream seemed to denote, some great trouble should come upon them; they hated him the more for it.

To what a height their envy arose! and they only wanted a convenient opportunity to

put an end to him : but Joseph was preserved, and carried above them, as all the Lord's faithful servants will be, above their persecutors, or those envious ones that hate them.

Joseph had another dream, wherein he saw the sun, and moon, and eleven stars make obeisance to him ; which he also told to his brethren, and to his father.

His father, at first, seemed to be rather displeased at it ; as importing, as he said to Joseph, " what is this dream that thou hast dreamed ? shall I, and thy mother, and thy" (eleven) " brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee, to the earth ? His brethren envied him for this dream also ; but his father, on further reflection " observed" it as a token from the Lord, of something that should befall them at a future time.

Jacob was a herdsman and shepherd, as his father and grandfather were before him ; that is, their principal business was to keep cattle and sheep.

Shortly after Joseph had those dreams ; as his brethren, (all except Benjamin) were

tending their father's flock, at a place called Shechem; Jacob proposed sending his favourite Joseph to see whether his brethren and the flocks fared well. And when he proposed it to him; Joseph, (notwithstanding the apparent danger that attended his complying, considering his brethren's enmity against him, and not knowing what their malice might induce them to do to him, when they had him away from his father) like a faithful and obedient son, readily answered, "here am I."

Behold in Joseph a good example for sons and daughters, to mind what the scriptures say; "children obey your parents in the Lord," (that is, as far as their commands are consistent with the Lord's will) "for this is right: honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee."

It is right for children to obey their parents in all their reasonable commands; though apparently they may be attended with danger, if obeyed, as Jacob's was to Joseph.

Having received his father's message, he went in search of his brethren. He expected

to find them at Shechem ; but as he was wandering in the field, looking for them, a certain man saw him, and having enquired of him his business, the man told him, he heard them propose going to Dothan ; where Joseph found them.

This was a favourable opportunity for them to satisfy their envious spirits against their innocent brother ; and they proposed embracing it : for when they saw him coming afar off, even before he came near unto them, they said, " behold this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay (or kill) him, and cast him into some pit ; and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him."

What reason, or excuse, could they have for committing such a wicked act ? that they might, as they said, " see what would become of his dreams." They flattered themselves with the idea, that if they killed him, they should prevent his dreams coming to pass : which they wished to do ; for their proud hearts could not bear the idea of their younger brother being promoted above them ; and

they being so humbled as to bow down themselves to the earth before him.

But vain was the attempt ; for if those dreams were of God, they could not prevent the fulfilment of them ; and if not, they had no cause to be concerned about them. But it was not for them to put an end to him or his dreams ; for the will of God was, that they should be exactly fulfilled ; as we shall see while relating this story.

But can we suppose that they will all join in their most horrid design of killing him ? Among the most wicked it is hardly likely that ten persons will all join, and persist in committing such a crime.

However, we will hope better things of the sons of Jacob (or Israel) who were highly favoured of the Lord, with many blessings ; and among the rest, with religious parents ; who, no doubt, set them a good example, and instructed them after a godly sort.

It so turned out ; for Reuben, being more tender hearted than the rest, and wishing to get his brother out of their hands, that he

might deliver him to his father again ; began to devise means for that purpose : and recollecting that there was a deep pit in the wilderness, hard by where they were, he advised them to cast Joseph therein, intending at a suitable time, to take him home.

The proposal was agreed to. It happened, (or providence so ordered) that there was no water in the pit, otherwise he might have perished immediately.

They now concluded their wicked design was accomplished, in slaying their brother, by the very means which Reuben proposed for saving him ; for he said to them ; “shed no blood, but cast him into this pit ; that he might rid him out of their hands.” And their conduct shews their disposition of mind ; for after they had thus buried their brother alive, they contentedly sat down to eat ; and perhaps rejoiced that they had (as they supposed) rid themselves of the disagreeable sensations of his dreams being fulfilled upon them.

But Reuben was disappointed of accomplishing his worthy design ; for before he had

an opportunity of taking Joseph out of the pit ; and even before they had done eating, they saw a company of Ishmaelitish merchants, (who were their relations, being descended of Ishmael, brother to Isaac, their grandfather) who “came from Gilead, with camels, loaded with spices, and balm, and myrrh; carrying them down to Egypt.”

We can scarcely admit that they were so wicked as to desire to slay their brother ; but only to get him away from them, that his dreams should not be fulfilled upon them.

A thought therefore struck Judah, that it would be best to sell him to those merchants, and send him to Egypt: concluding that they should never see him again ; and should, therefore, be quite freed from any apprehension on his account : to which the rest agreed, as likely to effect the desired purpose : for Judah said, “ what profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? let not our hands be upon him, for he is our brother, and our flesh.”

But how much more like a brother would he have acted, if he had joined with Reuben, to deliver him to his father, instead of selling him for a servant. But he, like the rest, wished to have him out of sight and mind ; and accordingly, they sold him (in Reuben's absence) for twenty pieces of silver.

When Reuben returned to the pit, and found Joseph was not there, he was much grieved, " and rent his clothes." And he went to his brethren, and said, " the child is not ;" (meaning not in the pit) " and I, whither shall I go ?" How shall I find comfort now my dear brother is gone, I know not whither ? And how shall I pacify my aged father, for the loss of his darling son ? for I know he will be much grieved thereat.

Reuben's brethren were not concerned about their father's trouble for the loss of his son : for, (as many bad children do, when they commit a fault) they sat themselves at work, to contrive a lie, to deceive him. Thus they added sin to sin ; instead of mending one fault, they made another.

How much better it is for those who commit a fault, to acknowledge it honourably, that they may be forgiven ; than by denying it, make it greater.

Their scheme was, to kill a kid out of the flock; and dip Joseph's coat into the blood : after which they took the coat to their father, and said unto him, "this have we found: know now (or, judge now) whether it be thy son's coat, or no."

Their father knew the coat, because it was a remarkable one, being made of many colours. And he said, "it is my son's coat ; an evil beast hath devoured him ; Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces." "And Jacob" (like his son Reuben) "rent his clothes, and mourned for his son many days.

" And all his sons, and all his daughters,* rose up to comfort him ; but he refused to be comforted, and said, I will go down into

* We do not find any account of Jacob's having more than one daughter, except in this place. Perhaps the text means his daughters in-law, his sons' wives.

the grave unto my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

A sorrowful case indeed ! for the old man to be thus deprived of his son, by his wicked and hard hearted children ; and with an expectation of his being killed by a wild beast. And then for those deceitful sons to pretend to comfort their father, after being the cause of his trouble, shows that they had very hard hearts.

But the Lord who knows all hearts, knew how it was with them. No secret thing can be hid from him. He knows all our thoughts, words and actions ; and he will judge us accordingly. Though we may hide faults from each other, (as Jacob's sons did from him) yet we cannot hide any thing from his all-seeing eye : therefore it is necessary to watch and pray continually, lest we do any thing that may displease him.

The sins of Joseph's brethren were three-fold : first for selling their brother as a servant ; next for telling a lie to conceal it ; and

lastly, for deceiving their aged father, and thereby causing him much trouble.

They have now sold Joseph as a slave, to be carried to Egypt, and therefore conclude that they shall be rid of him altogether, and shall see him no more ; so that they may rest quite easy about his dreams ; apprehending that they have accomplished their wishes. That instead of his ruling over them, and they bowing to the earth before him ; he is now a slave, and they are free men. But perhaps some turn may take place in their circumstances. Our prosperity or adversity is altogether in the hands of the Lord. He can bless or blast at his pleasure. " He can raise up those of low degree, and set them among princes, and cast down the mighty from their seats."

Therefore " let not the rich, glory in their riches, nor the wise, in their wisdom, nor the strong, in their strength," (nor those who gain an advantage of others, like Joseph's brethren, in their superiority) " but let them

that glory, glory in the Lord ;" and be humble.

We will now leave Joseph's brethren in the hands of the Lord, and let him reward them according to their works; while we accompany the poor slave into Egypt.



CHAPTER II.

THE merchant who bought Joseph, sold him to Potiphar an officer of distinction under Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

We have good reason to suppose that Joseph was a virtuous youth; first, by his obedience to his father, and also because he was favoured and blessed of the Lord; for, "Joseph's master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

As Joseph's faithfulness was proved; his master finding his affairs to prosper in Joseph's hands, placed so much confidence in

him, that “he made him overseer of his house ; and all that he had he placed under Joseph’s care : so that he knew not aught that he had, except the provisions which he ate” when they were set before him.

From which time “the Lord blessed the Egyptian, his master, for Joseph’s sake ; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, both in the house and in the field.”

What a great thing it is to have the Lord’s blessing upon every thing that we do ! See how it exalted Joseph ; so that from a common slave, he became a principal man in his master’s house. And to be thus favoured, we must, like Joseph, be honest and faithful to our trust. For the Lord has declared that “the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land.”

Some people are apt to talk of their good or bad luck ; and according to such persons, Joseph was merely a lucky man.

They would conclude that he was lucky ; first by getting a good master, and next by

finding every thing to prosper which he had under his care. But in truth, there is no such thing as luck. Let us learn therefore to thank God, and not to thank fortune, &c. whenever we succeed in any thing ; for whatever it be, we succeed only because the Lord is with us in that thing.

What an honour it was to Joseph to be thus completely trusted with his master's whole affairs.

There are some common servants, who, by being remarkable for their faithfulness and honesty, have risen, first to be upper servants and then even to be stewards in their master's house.

Like Joseph, they have been faithful in small matters, till they have gained the confidence of their master and mistress ; and then they have been promoted to higher stations, and trusted with more confidence.

But there are so many, both of bound and hired servants, who are dishonest, that it makes people very cautious who they have in their service.

It is a great favour to have people in our houses, who are entirely trusty: such as those ought to be encouraged; but such as are dishonest are not safe to be associated with.

Parents should be very careful in bringing up their children, to discourage every appearance of dishonesty, even in the smallest matters: for when children get into the habit of stealing, it is apt to grow upon them, and lead them on to greater evils. But on the contrary, what encouragement we have to take good people into our families; for God, perhaps, may bless us for their sakes.

We have accompanied Joseph to Potiphar's house; and have seen him, though a servant, settled in peace and prosperity; but if he continue long in this situation, he will be more favoured than is common with good people: for the Scriptures assure us that "this world is not the place of our rest." Therefore our prosperity is often interrupted, in order that our minds may be drawn from things below, and engaged to lay up treasure where we shall shortly go to enjoy it.

It so happened with Joseph, that his peace was soon turned to trouble : for his mistress, not living in the fear of God as he did ; and being captivated with his beauty, endeavoured to draw him into sin ; but his virtue and goodness would not permit him to yield to her solicitations.

He argued with her upon this very good ground. " My master," said he, " hath committed all that he hath, to my hand. There is none in this house greater than I ; neither hath he kept from me (or refused me) any thing but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? "

Here is a worthy example of wisdom and goodness. He was in the strongest manner tempted : by what ? not by any ordinary occurrence, nor any thing short of his mistress, endeavouring to seduce him with her charms. Not publicly, whereby he would be likely to be detected, and accused to his master, but privately ; and by whom he might hope to be protected, and often caressed.

How may we suppose he would act on such an occasion? Is not every circumstance in favour of his complying? But Joseph “feared God,” and the Lord was with him, and preserved him from evil; therefore he manfully refused her, not fearing the consequence; as well he might: for “if the Lord be on our side, who can be against us?” at least we need not fear who may be against us.

Joseph thought with himself, as he said to his mistress, “how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Let his example be a caution to us, how we sin against God in any case; not fearing what man, or woman, shall think, say, or do to us.

Joseph knew that the eye of God was upon him at all times, and in all places; and I have no doubt but that he had long acted under the influence of that knowledge.

What was it that made him such a faithful steward of his master’s goods? It was his being aware that God could see the smallest dishonesty in him; and that the eye of God

was upon him, even when his master's back was turned. And what was it that made him now resist another kind of temptation? It was the same principle of regard to Almighty God. This principle seems to have been very powerful in him, and also to have been always at hand.

Joseph, I apprehend, was not used to pass days and hours together, without thinking of God, as some people do. Had this been the case, I question whether he would not have yielded to one or other of his temptations.

And now let me request my readers to take a hint from Joseph, and to try themselves in the following manner.

Say to yourselves individually, what am I in secret? What am I when no eye but that of God is upon me? When some fellow-creature, or my own inclination, invites me to sin; when an opportunity offers; when there is also no danger of discovery, so that my reputation is safe; and when my worldly interest will not be hurt, but rather promoted by the indulgence; when, in short, against all

these temptations which beset me, there is nothing to oppose, but the fear of God in the heart; how do I then act?

Is the fear of God so strong in me as to gain the victory? Am I able to conquer my temptations, however suited to my age, circumstances and condition in life; and to say as Joseph did? "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

If with any, the fear and love of God is not sufficiently predominant, to preserve them from sinning, when all things unite in its favour, as they did with Joseph; let them remember, as he did, that no wickedness can be done in secret; for the eye of God is upon us every where, and at all times; and that "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with the least degree of allowance or approbation; and what is done in secret, he will bring to light," as he did the hidden conduct of Joseph's brethren.

But those who are obedient to the divine principle within them, which alone is sufficient to enable them to overcome all temptations

to evil, as Joseph was, they are possessed of the substance of true religion, let their name to religion be what it may.

Some are apt to complain of the difficulties of religion, as though it were almost unattainable ; nevertheless it is very simple : But others pretend that it is more simple than it really is : For some there are, who fancy themselves religious, because they attend at places appointed for worship, because they understand some religious doctrines, because they remember to have experienced certain religious feelings, or because they have a number of religious phrazes frequently in their mouths ; and live, what is termed, a moral and orderly life.

But such religion will not recommend us to divine favour, in the day when we shall be judged according to our works, any more than the good works of the rich young man ; who gave our blessed Lord a very favourable account of his moral life. That he had lived clear of many immoralities, which our Lord mentioned to him, “ from his youth up” to

that time, and likely, he could answer as clearly respecting every thing else of an evil tendency ; and might be said to have lived a strictly moral life ; so that he gained the love and approbation of his Lord and Master.

This young man had advanced farther in religious experience, than most christian professors ; and perhaps few exceed him : yet our Lord told him he was still lacking of the means of obtaining eternal life, and informed him what he should do to be perfect ; but instead of complying, he turned away sorrowful ; not considering that “obedience is better than sacrifice ;” and simply to do what we are commanded, than all high professions of religion. Therefore let none trust in the performance of certain religious duties, though good and right in themselves, while they fall short of the one thing needful, as this goodly young man did ; whereby they may miss of eternal life. See Matt. xix. 16 to 30. But let us, like Joseph, “fear God, and do his will, for this is the whole duty of man.”

We have no account of Joseph's religious opinions; nor of the form of worship which he preferred; which are of small concern. "Man looks at the outward appearance, or performance, but the Lord looks at the heart." But we read that both in his prosperity, and in his adversity, he was faithful to his God.

And we find also, (as we shall see by and by) that although his brethren had used him very cruelly, yet he behaved very kindly and charitably towards them, and forgave them freely, and rejoiced over them, to do them good. May my religion be like his; and may I, by his example, walk worthy of that "vocation wherewith I am called."



CHAPTER III.

WE left Joseph in Potiphar's house, enjoying peace and prosperity, till his wicked mistress interrupted his happiness; and because his virtue would not permit him to yield to her desire, when his master was from

home, she accused Joseph falsely to him when he returned; endeavouring to lay her guilt upon him, saying; “The Hebrew servant which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me, and as I lifted up my voice, and cried, he fled out.” At which (supposed) breach of that trust and confidence, which his whole conduct had merited, his master’s “wrath was kindled;” and Joseph having no proof to offer of his innocence, Potiphar concluded to displace him from the family; as might reasonably be expected; and as all bad servants ought to be.

Joseph’s master did not think proper to set him at liberty, but confined him in prison; the most proper place for those who will not conduct orderly, when at liberty.

It is a hard case when the innocent are falsely accused, and made to suffer for the guilty; but they have consolation, as Joseph had; for the Lord was with him, which made amends for all his trouble; for “where the presence of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Every place is liberty, even in a dungeon,

when we enjoy the presence of the Lord, and a clear conscience. This is true liberty, and produces that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

The Lord was with Joseph, and gave him favour with the keeper of the prison ; who promoted him to honour there, as his master had done at his house ; and made him overseer of all the other prisoners who were confined with him ; and whatsoever they did, was by his direction : so that “ the keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand, because the Lord was with Joseph, and made all that he did to prosper.”

Behold the advantage of religion and virtue ! Thus the Lord favours his faithful ones, who love and fear him above all things, and serve him in faithfulness, and with a pure heart. He will make a dungeon to be as a palace to them, and raise them above the reach of man ; for “ nothing shall be able to hurt or destroy, in all God’s holy mountain,” nor among his people.

And though the Lord sometimes permits his servants to suffer afflictions in this life, yet they are intended for their good, and if borne with patience and resignation to the divine will, and amendment of life be produced thereby, they will prove to be blessings to us, and will promote our happiness hereafter. As one who suffered much in the flesh observed, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Some time after Joseph was confined in prison, two of his fellow prisoners who were under his care, viz. the chief butler, and the chief baker, of Pharaoh, by some misconduct had offended their lord, the king ; for which they were committed to prison : and each of them dreamed a dream in one night.

And Joseph going into their apartment in the morning, (after his usual manner, as he had the care of them) he observed that their countenances were sad, as if something more than usual troubled them ; and no doubt, (considering his virtue and goodness) he felt

a concern to know the cause of their uneasiness, and a desire to relieve them as far as he had power; as every one ought to do, who observes a fellow-creature in distress.

And Joseph said unto them, “wherefore look ye so sadly to day?” and they answered him, “we have each dreamed a dream, and have none to interpret them.”

Their dreams were remarkable; which made them uneasy, and desirous to know the meaning of them.

The Lord, who in those days, frequently made known to people, by dreams, what should come to pass, influenced Joseph's mind to make known to them the meaning of theirs: “And he said unto them, do not interpretations belong to God?* tell them to me.”

* What could he mean by that? Can we suppose that Joseph compared himself with God? Or that he had the presumption to endeavour to make them believe that he was God? by no means: such a supposition is too daring to be admitted. What then can these make

The butler first related his dream, saying : “ In my dream I saw a vine, with three branches ; which appeared as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth ; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes : and Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand : and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.

“ And Joseph said unto him, this is the interpretation of it : The three branches are three days : yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place : and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh’s cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me

of it, who will not admit of such a thing as divine revelation !

According to such people’s opinions, what use would there be in telling those dreams to Joseph, seeing he himself acknowledged that interpretations belong only to God ? And if he gave a correct interpretation of them, it must be by divine inspiration. I think this is a conclusive answer to such an objection.

when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing deserving of this dungeon.”

The baker being pleased with the interpretation of the butler’s dream, observing that it was favourable to him, then related his; saying, “I also saw in my dream that I had three white baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket there was all manner of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.”

And Joseph said, “This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days: yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.”

All which took place accordingly; for the third day after Joseph interpreted their

dreams, was the king's birth day ; on which he made a feast for all his servants : and he commanded those two to be released from prison ; and did to them according to the interpretation of their dreams.

But the butler soon forgot his friend in prison ; though he desired him, in affecting terms, to remember him when it should be well with himself.

Ah ! how just a likeness is this of a great part of mankind ! Pomp and pleasure are apt to divert the mind from the obligations of gratitude. We are too apt, while faring well ourselves, to take no thought about those who are poor, and sick, and in prison , and stand much in need of our help.

To look at the conduct of the butler with the natural eye, we might readily conclude that he was much to blame, for so soon forgetting his friend in prison ; who had so exactly foretold his restoration to his former office. But let us consider the matter a little. All times and seasons are in the Lord's hand, and his time is the best time.

I apprehend the butler timed it exactly right for Joseph's good ; which was two years after his release, before he made Joseph known to Pharaoh : for if he had mentioned him sooner, and had gotten him out of prison before that time, perhaps Joseph would have missed of the great honour to himself, and the good to others, which he was enabled to do, by continuing in prison till the right time for his release.

Let this circumstance be a caution to us in all cases to wait till the Lord's time : for many, by being impatient, and fixing a time for themselves, have missed of great benefits, if not blessings.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT two years after the release of the king's chief butler and baker out of prison, the king himself had two dreams, which occasioned him considerable uneasiness.

One was thus : He thought he "stood by the river ; and there came up out of the river, seven fat and good looking kine, (or cows) and they fed in a meadow ; and after them came up seven poor and ill favoured kine, which stood by the others. And the seven lean kine did eat and devour the seven fat ones."

In the other dream he saw "seven good and full ears of corn grow upon one stalk ; and after them sprang up seven thin and blasted ears, and the latter devoured the former, and he awoke."

And his dreams troubled him, as they seemed to signify something remarkable that should happen, but he could not guess the meaning of them.

He therefore collected together the wise men of his kingdom, to try if they could interpret them to him : but they all failed ; and no wonder : for, as Joseph said in the former cases, “interpretations belong only to God.”

“ Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day. Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me and the chief baker in ward, in the captain of the guard’s house. And we each dreamed in one night.

“ And there was with us a young man, an Hebrew: and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams ; and they came to pass accordingly : that I should be restored to mine office, and that he should be hanged.”

Then the king sent for Joseph out of prison ; and he shaved himself ; and changed his raiment ; in order to appear before the king. And Joseph came before Pharaoh, being then thirty years old. “ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it : (meaning among the Egyptians) and I have heard say of thee,

that thou canst understand a dream, to interpret it.

“ And Joseph answered Pharaoh saying: It is not in me, (meaning, ‘ I am not able of myself to give Pharaoh an answer in this matter:’ and then told him who alone was able) but God,” said he, “ shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

Here is humility! Joseph takes none of the honour and glory to himself, which many would have been glad of the opportunity of doing, that they might exalt themselves, by pretending that they did it ‘ by the might of their own power! ’ But Joseph gives the glory to God, to whom alone it is due.

Then Pharaoh related his dreams to Joseph, as before mentioned.

“ And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream is one,” that is to say, the two dreams signify one and the same thing; “ and God hath shewed Pharaoh (by means of them) what he is about to do.

“ The seven good kine are (or signify) seven years; and also the seven good ears

of corn are seven years. And the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them are seven years ; and the seven blasted ears of corn are also seven years.

“ This therefore is the thing which God is about to do ; for first cometh seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt ; and after them shall be seven years of famine ; and the plenty shall be forgotten by reason of the famine which shall follow ; for it shall be very grievous.

“ Now therefore, (continued Joseph) let Pharaoh look out a man who is discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt ; and let him appoint officers, and let them gather food in the seven plenteous years, and lay it up in the cities ; and it shall be for store against the seven years of famine, in order to preserve life.”

And Joseph’s advice pleased Pharaoh and his servants.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, “ can we find any one so suitable as this, (Joseph) a man in whom the spirit of God is ? ”

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, " forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, thou shalt therefore be over my house ; and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled ; only on the throne will I be greater than thou."*

" And Pharaoh took off the ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand ; and arrayed him in vestments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck ; and made him to ride in the second chariot that he had ; and they cried before him, bow the knee ! And he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt."

* A great surprise, no doubt, and very unexpected to Joseph, to be thus promoted ; when he, in great humility, simply related what was made known to him, of what the Lord intended to do, and how it was to be effected ; not expecting, that he should be the instrument to put it in execution ; rather concluding that some great man of Egypt would be appointed to the office : but this brings to mind the saying of our Lord : " He that exalteth himself shall be abased ; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Now where is Joseph? or what was he in former times? He was a slave, sold by his brethren in the land of Canaan, to be carried to Egypt, that they might be rid of him, and not be subject to the humbling apprehension of having their younger brother to rule over them, and they to bow to the earth before him. But methinks they will, by and by, be glad of the opportunity, under the necessity, and count it an honour to them to do so.

He was sold as a slave in Egypt, but was soon promoted to be chief man in the house of his master.

He was next cast into the dungeon: for what? for doing evil? No: but for being faithful to his religious duty. He was there promoted above his fellow prisoners; and then released, and honoured with ability of doing what all the great men of Egypt could not do; by which he was promoted to be next to the king for power and grandeur.

What was the cause of all those changes? "It is all the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes."

“ For it is the Lord that maketh rich, and maketh poor ; that lifteth up and casteth down. He taketh the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire ; that he may set him among princes ; even with the princes of the people. For the Lord is merciful to them that fear him : he will keep the way of his saints.”

It is true, he sometimes afflicts, even his most favoured people. “ He brings down their heart through heaviness ; they fall down, and there is none to help them. He also suffers them to be evilly entreated by tyrants.” But at length he “ brings them out of darkness, and out of the shadow of death, and breaks their bonds in sunder. He leads them by a way which they know not ; he makes darkness light before them ; and crooked things straight :” and thus, “ though heaviness may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.”

“ O praise the Lord then ye servants of his ! O praise the name of the Lord ! blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth,

for evermore ! For he preserveth the way of his saints, and hath been ever mindful of his covenant.

“ He saved Noah from the waters of the flood, he brought forth righteous Lot out of Sodom, he preserved Shadrach and his companions in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion’s den. He delivered David his servant from the peril of the sword. He shewed also his ways unto Moses, and his works unto the children of Israel. He also caused a dearth in the land of Egypt, and destroyed the provision of bread.

“ But he sent a man before, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant ; whose feet they hurt in the stocks ; the iron entered into his soul, until the time came that his cause was heard. Then the king sent and delivered him, the prince of the people let him go free ; he made him lord also of his house, and ruler of all his substance.”

But let not any of my readers suppose that Joseph is now to be admired merely for his greatness : and that the fine things which Pha-

raoh gave him, were the chief things he was pleased with ; or the only ornaments which he had : I think not ; but that he possessed “ the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit ; which is, in the sight of God, of great price.”

Joseph was, undoubtedly, a great man ; but he was as good as he was great ; and what is all earthly greatness, unless goodness be joined with it ? only “ vanity and vexation of spirit.”

But Joseph was not thus honoured merely to be great and grand, and to live in idleness and vanity ; but to be useful to his fellow creatures ; which, undoubtedly, was his desire ; and it is also the duty of all whom the Lord has favoured, with abundance of the good things of this life : “ that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; and that they do good : that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against

the time to come ; that they may lay hold on eternal life."

CHAPTER V.

JOSEPH, being fully authorised by the king, sat out, agreeably to his own plan, and gathered food in different parts of the country, and laid it up in store-houses in every city, during the seven fruitful years ; for the earth brought forth plentifully, as Joseph had foretold : and they were followed by seven years of famine, which was very great ; not only in Egypt, but also in other countries.

And when the people were in a starving condition, and "cried to Pharaoh for bread ;" he said to them, "go unto Joseph," and "what he saith to you, do."

" And Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians. And all countries came into Egypt, to Joseph, for to buy corn, because the famine was sore in all lands :" even in Canaan, where Joseph's father and brethren dwelt.

The famine was so great in the land of Canaan; that Jacob and his sons were much straitened, how to get food for themselves and families; but at length the joyful news arrived, that corn was to be had in Egypt.

Then Jacob said unto his sons, (whose countenances were all cast down on the occasion,) "why do ye look one upon another? behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither and buy for us, that we may live and not die."

Jacob had no idea that he was sending to buy food of his beloved son Joseph, who had the alone disposal of it in Egypt; and far was the thought from his sons, that he whom they had formerly despised, and sold as a slave, hoping never to see him again, was to be the instrument of preserving them alive.

We often deprive ourselves of real blessings, by setting up our own wills above the will of God; and saying, "we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel," and do our own wills; but when calamity overtakes us, we, like Joseph's brethren, are wil-

ing to apply to him for bread, whom we formerly despised, and sold for a few trifling gratifications, comparable to twenty pieces of silver, to prevent his reigning over us. But how wonderfully does God accomplish his own purposes! He often makes use of us, poor short-sighted mortals, to bring them to pass for our good; when, at the same time we are opposing them with all our might, to suit our own evil inclinations, though against our interest.

Joseph's brethren thought, that by selling him as a slave to be taken to Egypt, they should never see him again, and of course, should never have to bow before him: but that very act of selling him, now produces means for their support, in this time of trial; and brings about the fulfilment of his dreams: for the Lord is now making use of those very men for that purpose, (who sold him in order to prevent it) by bringing on them a severe famine; and obliging them to go to Egypt to buy food.

Therefore ten of them went to Egypt, leaving Benjamin at home; their father not being willing to part with him, lest he should loose him as he had Joseph.

Jacob had no suspicion that his other sons were the instruments of bereaving him of Joseph, otherwise his fears of sending Benjamin with them to Egypt, might have arisen from an apprehension, that they would do the same by him; for the wicked are hardly to be trusted with their liberty; much less with any valuable treasure.

When they arrived in Egypt, they applied to the governor of the place for corn; not guessing who it was, but concluded he was some great lord, who had the command of the stores of Egypt: therefore, with great humility, they bowed themselves to the earth before him; not supposing that this was the person, to whom, when he related his dream to them, they reproachfully said, "Shalt thou reign over us? or shalt thou have dominion over us? and they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words."

And they likewise said, -“ Behold this dreamer cometh, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.”

But now Joseph had the advantage of them, and intended to keep it, till he should fully prove and humble them.

He knew them, and remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them ; but he made strange, as if he did not : and spake roughly to them, and said, “ Whence come ye ? And they said, from the land of Canaan, to buy food.”

Then he charged them with being spies ; and said “ they came to see the nakedness of the land.”

They must now be in a tried situation. The Lord is rewarding them, according to their own works. “ He taketh the wise (or those who pretend to be wise) in their own craftiness. The pit which they digged for their brother, they have fallen into themselves.” Which is the case with many more, who spread a snare for others, and are taken therein themselves.

When Joseph charged them with being spies ; they (or one of them, answering for them all) in great humility said, “ Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man’s sons, we are true men ; thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, nay but to see the nakedness of the land are ye come.”

Let none take advantage of Joseph’s words, and say he spoke falsely ; the Lord may do as pleaseth him, and none has a right to say unto him, what doest thou ?

In former times he sometimes permitted his people to speak in the affirmative ; when the contrary was evident : but let none take liberty on that account ; for the Lord has declared that “ every liar shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone ?”

Joseph’s brethren answered him again, “ thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan ; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not ;” (meaning Joseph, whom they had sold, and with whom they were then talking.)

Now Joseph had a further advantage of them, whereby he intended to prove and humble them still more.

This seems to have been his principal object in charging them with being spies, that he might humble them ; and to find out whether his brother Benjamin was living or not : whom, no doubt he was very desirous of seeing ; as he was his youngest, and only brother by his own mother ; and very likely, Joseph and Benjamin were particularly attached to each other while young, and more immediate companions and playmates at their father's house.

And Joseph said unto them “ hereby ye shall be proved ; ye shall not (all) go forth hence, (or return home) except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you to fetch him, and ye (or the rest of you) shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you ; or else, surely ye are spies.

Joseph had good reason to doubt their words, and to question whether there was any

truth in them ; on recollecting that they had sold him, and then told a lie to hide it from their father : according to a common maxim ; “ a liar is not to be believed, though he should speak truth.”

And as they had been bad enough to sell him, their brother, (or even to kill him, if they had not been diverted from it,) and then to conceal it by a falsehood ; they might now be disposed to deceive him with the same false tongues.

What a dreadful thing is the sin of lying ! not only the terrors of the Lord for sin, and the dreadful sentence pronounced upon liars, which we ought greatly to fear : but we labour under material disadvantage in this life.

Our fellow creatures cannot place any confidence in what we say, which often subjects us to much difficulty and perplexity, as was the case with Joseph’s brethren. They had been guilty of lying ; and Joseph seemed not to place any confidence in what they said ; and therefore demanded a proof of it, by one of them going home, and bringing their other

brother ; which was difficult to comply with, on account of the want of provisions at home, which would not admit of delay ; and likewise the great difficulty they should meet with in obtaining liberty of their father for Benjamin to go to Egypt, if he would consent at all ; which nothing would induce him to do, but the extreme famine which they felt.

Behold the great evil of lying ! what perplexity it occasioned to Joseph's brethren, (as we shall see further while relating this story) because their words could not be taken ; but a proof so difficult to obtain was demanded. Oh ! that all my readers may shun every appearance of it, as they would a serpent, and not give it the smallest place in their minds ; but on all occasions speak truth : for lying to hide a fault, adds greatly to it, and ought to receive a double correction : but on the contrary, punishment for a fault ought to be lightened, if not entirely suspended, when the fault is candidly acknowledged.

Joseph, as before mentioned, put all his ten brethren in prison ; with a view of sending

one of them home to bring to him his brother Benjamin. But recollecting that the famine was great in Canaan: and, no doubt, being concerned on account of his father's and brethren's families ; lest they should suffer for want of provisions ; concluded it would not do to keep nine of them there ; therefore, after three days confinement, he said unto them ; “ this do, and live ; for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of you be kept in prison ; and the rest go and carry corn for the famine of your houses : but bring your youngest brother unto me ; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die.”

Oh ! how dreadful is a guilty conscience ! it will cause our sins to haunt us, years after they have been committed.

While they were in prison they had time to reflect on their past conduct and their present condition : and being in great trouble (their cruel treatment of Joseph coming fresh into their minds, though they knew not that he was the great man who had confined them;) “ they said one to another, we are verily guilty con-

cerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us (to spare him) and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us."

But Reuben, (who had no hand in the business; but rather was desirous of relieving Joseph from them, and of delivering him safe to his father) now having a clear conscience, (above all things desirable) could upbrade the others for their hardness of heart; saying, did I not speak unto you, saying, do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear, therefore his blood is required" at our hands.

Such is the conviction of wicked men, when calamity overtakes them. Although they may for a time darken the light of Conscience, that "candle of the Lord" within us, yet it can never be totally put out. Upon a sudden misfortune, or dangerous fit of sickness, the sense of guilt revives; and while the hand of God is felt, the justice of the punishment is acknowledged. Therefore "keep innocency, and do the thing that is right; for that, and that only, will bring peace at the last."

The language of Canaan was different from that of Egypt ; therefore, Joseph having been several years in Egypt, became accustomed to the Egyptian language ; and in order to carry the appearance of an Egyptian before his brethren, he spake unto them by an interpreter ; thereby concealing from them that he understood their conversation ; which gave him the advantage of observing their remorse and repentance for what they had done to him.

Joseph being of a tender, affectionate disposition, and, as he said, "fearing God," his bowels of compassion were moved towards his brethren, notwithstanding their cruelty towards him, while he thus appeared to treat them like strangers ; who only came into that country as spies ; and he could no longer contain himself in that austere appearance, but turned from them, and wept.

Behold in Joseph the true likeness of a real Christian ; who, though he lived upwards of seventeen hundred years before Christ, acted agreeably to the command of

Christ to his followers : “love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you.”

How many there are who bear the name of Christians, who do not, in practice, come so near the spirit of Christianity as Joseph did ! and how many are there who do ! I fear, very few.

Joseph’s brethren hated him, and appeared as bitter enemies against him ; yet, behold his love and tenderness towards them, and endeavours to do them good ! notwithstanding his high station ; and how much he was raised above them.

This would create in the minds of many Christians, or those who are willing to be called Christians, a spirit of haughtiness ; and would induce them to treat their brethren, who may stand in need of their assistance, with indifference, or even contempt, especially when they have the same cause that Joseph had.

CHAPTER VI.

JOSEPH now proposed discharging his brethren, that they might return home with provisions for their families, except Simeon, whom he detained in prison, agreeably to his proposition, that one of them should remain there as security for their bringing Benjamin to him when they should return.

He therefore commanded his servants to fill their sacks, or bags, with corn: beside which he gave them provisions for their journey, and returned the money which they paid for the corn, into their sacks: probably, in order to carry on his design of humbling them; and to prepare their minds to receive him in a different disposition from that in which they parted with him, when they sent him to Egypt.

This design, it seems, was to be carried on by troubling their minds, from time to time, by certain trying circumstances; such as, charging them with being spies; requesting them to bring Benjamin with them next time,

which they knew would be a great trial to their father, and as a security for so doing, to detain Simeon in prison: and then to return their money in their bags; which would cause them to appear dishonest, when they should discover it.

This design of Joseph's is similar to the design of Christianity.

We are, by nature, too much like Joseph's brethren; wicked and hard-hearted, even to sell our Lord and Saviour, for the trifling gratifications of time, as Joseph's brethren sold him for a little money; but, like them, we must be humbled: our "stony hearts must be taken away, that we may have, in the room thereof, hearts of flesh."

To effect which, we are frequently troubled with cross occurrences, losses and disappointments: and when any are thus tried, let them not conclude that it is the effect of chance; that it comes upon them without cause: for the Lord has declared, that "not an hair of our heads shall fall to the ground without his notice," or permission.

Neither does trouble spring out of the dust; but is sent to us as a gentle reproof and correction for our sins; that we may humble ourselves at the feet of Jesus, as Joseph's brethren did at his feet; and that we may obtain forgiveness, by sincere repentance, as they did.

In general, the life of Joseph is an instructive lesson in Christianity, which I intend to shew more at large hereafter.

The sons of Jacob, on their way home, stopped at an inn (or tavern) to feed their beasts: and one of them, on opening his sack, found the money which he had paid for the corn, neatly tied up, and put therein; which alarmed them exceedingly; and they concluded that the judgment of God was coming upon them in earnest, for their evil treatment of their brother, and perhaps other crimes which they were guilty of; all rushing into their minds; such as telling a lie to their father to conceal their guilt, &c.

For when he discovered his money, which he thought he had left in Egypt, "he said

unto them, my money is restored : and their hearts failed them ; and they were afraid, saying one to another, what is this that God hath done unto us?" or is about to do to us ?

Oh ! how dreadful is a guilty conscience ! it haunts the mind with fearful apprehensions, at every little circumstance which seems to lead toward a discovery of the crime ; and occasions it to take fright when no danger is near ; continually disturbing the peace that would otherwise take possession of the mind.

For no danger was near those men ; their fears were groundless. Instead of trouble, peace and prosperity were at the end of their journey. But they had guilty consciences, knowing that they had done amiss : therefore, instead of peace they had trouble : for, "there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord."

Therefore, dear reader, I must repeat it again, "keep innocency, and do the thing that is right ; for that, and that alone, will

produce peace through life, and at the hour of death."

After, refreshing themselves and their beasts, they journeyed homewards ; and related to their father all that befell them in Egypt, saying, " the man who is lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men ; we are no spies. We be twelve brethren, sons of our father : one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men ; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone. And bring your youngest brother unto me : then shall I know that you are no spies, but that you are true men : so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land."

When they emptied their sacks, each one found his money which he had taken with him : " and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid," or

troubled: and no wonder, considering the trouble they had met with while in Egypt, and probably, as they supposed, would meet with when they should return.

As formerly they were taken for spies, they might now be taken for thieves; and be imprisoned a long time, or perhaps fare worse.

But that was not all which troubled their father; the loss of his children, one after another, was much greater, as appears by his own expression: "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Against my peace, and unite to bring trouble upon me.

Thus the wisdom of God is beyond the comprehension of man; and his ways are hid, even from such as Jacob, (or Israel) who was so highly favoured; for he counted those things which were providentially working for his good, and comfort in this life, as being against him, and tending to add to his trouble.

Thus we are apt to count the designs of Providence for our good, as evils ; and by opposing them in our own wills, deprive ourselves of the great benefits resulting therefrom : rather let us count all things as tending to our good, which are not produced by our own misconduct. Though goodly old Jacob could not see it so ; but, as he had lost two sons already, concluded, let the consequence be what it might, that Benjamin should not go from him.

And though Reuben solemnly promised to bring him back in safety, even to giving up his own sons to be slain if he did not, yet his father positively refused ; saying, “ my son shall not go with you ; for his brother is dead, (meaning Joseph, whom he concluded was certainly devoured by wild beasts,) and he (Benjamin) is left alone (of the children of Rachel) : if mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”

Perhaps the good old man was rather hasty in giving such a positive denial. His paren-

tal affection for his children was great, and particularly so for Joseph and Benjamin ; one of whom he supposed to be dead by an accident, (as it is generally termed) and they wanted to take the other away ; and he knew not but that a similar fate might happen to him : Simeon also was detained in Egypt.

These trying circumstances roused the affection, and raised the creaturely passions in the old man ; which drew him off his guard, or he forgot that the Lord causeth all things, which are of his own ordering, to work together for good : he therefore, in the midst of his trouble, (which, no doubt, was great) hastily concluded that his son should not go : forgetting the necessity of it ; that the famine was still great, and they could not subsist without provisions from Egypt ; and that they need not go there without Benjamin, as the lord of the country refused seeing them again, except he were with them.

This unavoidable necessity overpowered the old man's resolution and promise : and he said to his sons, " when the corn was spent

which they brought from Egypt, go again, buy us a little food :" to which they consented, provided he would send Benjamin with them : otherwise they would not go : for "the man," said they, "did solemnly protest unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you."

Here their father was brought into a strait and narrow way : he could not consent that Benjamin should go, and yet there was no alternative ; he must go, or they must all suffer.

He then began to reflect upon his sons, for telling the man, the lord of the country, that they had another brother : and they said, "he enquired particularly after our kindred ; whether our father was alive ; and whether we had another brother ;" and they told him the truth ; "not knowing that he would charge them to bring their brother with them to Egypt."

Judah then plead with his father to let Benjamin go ; promising to be surety for his

safe return ; and that if he did not bring him back, he would bear the blame for ever.

Then Israel, their father, said unto them, if it must be so, take of the best fruits of the land, a present for the man ; such as balm and honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds. And take double money with you, (not only sufficient to buy more corn,) but “ the money that you brought back, take again ; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise ; go again unto the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin : if I be bereaved of my children, there is no help for it, I must be bereaved.”

Then they took Benjamin, and the things which their father had ordered, and departed : no doubt, trembling with anxiety and fear, and contriving many precautions, to avoid giving offence to the great person to whom they were going.

Now this, I think, is similar to what sometimes happens to us. God is, perhaps, pre-

paring to favour us with some great blessing, just as he was about to favour the family of Jacob ; but before he gives us possession of it, he leads us through some dark and dreary path, and we fancy a great evil is coming upon us.

When therefore, God is opening the way to these new mercies, we hang back, and say with good old Jacob, "all these things are against me." But though loath to move forward, yet what can we do ? Some peril, greater than that which we had been dreading, awaits us if we make more delay. With a heavy heart, a complaining tongue, and with weeping eyes, we set forward in this path ; which is, in fact, the path to our chief happiness.

Thus do we often strive against our chief blessings : and this, I think, is a common case ; for what are all our complaints, but murmurings against Providence ? And do we not often murmur, even at those very dealings of a gracious God, which are intended for our good ?

Reader, look back at thy past life: consider those seasons when thou hast been forced by necessity on some unpleasant business, or when thou hast been hindered in thy pursuit of some favourite plan, or contradicted in thy opinions, or thy wishes.

Now and then, perhaps, thy situation in life has seemed quite melancholy and desperate: misery has appeared to threaten thee on every side, and thou hast had only a sad choice of evils, like the sons of Jacob, who thought they had only to choose between a famine at home, and the dread of more ill usage in Egypt. And yet has it not afterwards proved, that God was blessing thee by means of those very things, which thou thought, at the time, so terrible?

I apprehend there are many persons, who have had their souls saved, much in the same way in which this family of Jacob had their lives preserved. They have hung back, and struggled hard for a while against those very things which have opened the way to their eternal salvation: they have been² forced from

a life of sin and misery, as unwillingly as ever Jacob's sons were forced from Canaan, and brought into the fruitful land of Egypt.

For, how unwilling are people to have their souls saved! How unwilling, at least, to use those means which are absolutely necessary for it!

There are many who can hardly be persuaded to attend at places appointed for public worship, or to have their minds gathered into quiet, to wait upon God, when there: and yet this is an indispensable duty, and not to be trifled with, or omitted at our pleasure: As the apostle Paul enjoins; "Neglect not," saith he, "the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner (or practice) of some is; but present your bodies a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable unto God; (or in a manner which will find acceptance with him) which is our reasonable service (or duty): and be not conformed to this world, (or do not conform to it so much as to be altogether engaged about the concerns thereof, and have no time to seek one to come) but be ye trans-

formed (or changed from an earthly disposition to an heavenly) by the renewing (or enlivening) of your minds, (by having them collected, to wait upon God) that ye may prove (or understand beyond doubt) what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God." Or that by humbly waiting upon him, in a collective capacity, he may be pleased to shew us what his holy will concerning us is: and to fulfill his gracious promises: "where two or three are met together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them." And that is a reward sufficient, for meeting together to wait upon him: for, "in the Lord's presence there is life, and at his right hand, rivers of pleasure, for evermore."

And yet some are so loath to attend to this necessary duty, that they will not take the apostle's advice except forced to it, like the sons of Jacob were forced from Canaan to Egypt; though the necessity, or advantage, is much greater than their's was: one being to nourish the soul, and keep it alive unto

God, and the other only to sustain their perishable bodies.

And there are parents, who, by parting with their children for a season, would derive material benefit, both to themselves and children ; yet by an unwarrantable, or false fondness for them, they have been as loath to part with them, as Jacob was to part with Benjamin ; and thereby miss of the benefit or blessing attending it, as perhaps, Jacob and his children would, if he had not let Benjamin go from him : but, by so doing, the lives of that whole family were preserved. Let this be a warning to parents, not improperly to withhold their children, when it is best and right to part with them.

I observed before, that Jacob's eleven sons set out for Egypt ; and when they arrived, and drew near to Joseph's house, they met his steward at the door ; and being afraid, lest Joseph intended to take advantage of their having taken the money home with them, with which they bought corn when in Egypt before ; they began to apologize : informing

him that they had brought it back again ; and also other money to buy more food ; but that they could not tell who put their money into their sacks.

“ And he said, Peace be to you, fear not : your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks : I had your money. Then he brought Simeon (whom he had kept in prison) out unto them.” Then he took them into the house, and refreshed them and their beasts. And being informed that they were to dine with the lord of the country, they made ready the present which their father had sent, and presented it to him when he came home : and, at the same time, “ bowed themselves before him to the earth.”

“ And he asked them of their welfare ; and said, is your father well, the old man of whom ye speake ; is he yet alive ? And they answered, thy servant, our father, is in good health. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.” And when Joseph saw his dear brother Benjamin, his bowels yearned upon him ; and his eyes flowed with tears of joy :

and he was obliged to retire to his chamber to weep, lest his tears should discover him to his brethren.

After which he ordered dinner to be made ready for them ; and when they came to the table, by Joseph's directions they were seated according to their ages, from the eldest to the youngest ; and they, looking at each other, marvelled that Joseph should have such knowledge of them. And he prepared portions for them, which were handed round ; and Benjamin's portion was five times as large as any of the rest. " And they ate, and drank together, and were merry."



CHAPTER VII.

A CLEAR morning sun is often followed by a cloudy day ; and great prosperity and a cheerful mind, by extreme adversity, and depression of spirits. So it was with Joseph's brethren. Their feasting and merriment was followed by trouble, and great anxiety. --

Therefore let none be swallowed up in pleasure, or exalted in prosperity, and put the time of trouble afar off; for we know not what a day may bring forth.

After they had dined, Joseph commanded his steward to fill their sacks with food, as much as they could carry; and, as before, to put each one's money into his sack; and likewise to put his silver cup into the sack of the youngest.

And the next morning, as soon as it was light, they left the city, and journeyed homewards: no doubt, with joyful hearts, that they had fared so well while with the lord of the country, and were so favourably released, and likely to take Benjamin home to his anxious father.

But they had not gone far, before Joseph's steward overtook them, with a message from him, charging them with "rewarding him with evil for good," by stealing his silver cup.

Then they began to plead innocent; and to advance, in favour of their honesty, that they had brought back unto him the money which

they found in their sacks, after they returned home the other time. “How then,” said they, “should we steal out of thy lord’s house, silver or gold? God forbid that thy servant (or, that either of thy servants) should do such a thing.”

And then, being conscious of their innocence in this particular, they thought nothing too great to stake; that the theft could not be proved upon them.

Therefore they; or one of them on behalf of the whole, said to him, “with whomsoever of thy servants it is found, let him die; and we also (or the rest of us) will be my lord’s bondmen. And he said, let it be according to your words:” or much less than ye have offered. “He with whom it is found shall not die, but let him be my servant; and ye (or the rest of you) shall be held blameless.”

“Then they speedily took down, every man his sack, to the ground, and opened them;” being confident that they should be found to be clear of the charge. “And he searched them, beginning at the eldest, and

continued down to the youngest ; (though he knew in whose sack it was before he began) and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, (for grief, being quite ignorant of it till then,) and laded, every man his beast, and returned to the city.

“ And they came to Joseph's house, and fell on the ground before him. And Joseph said unto them, what deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not, (or, know ye not) that such a man as I (am) can certainly divine?” or know hidden things by divine revelation : which has been proved that he could do, by his interpreting of dreams, &c. but in this case it was only a sham ; to make them believe that it was revealed to him, that they had stolen his cup.

“ Then Judah (who was surety for Benjamin's safe return to his father) said, what shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or, how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.”

This is the case with some bad people now. They commit acts of wickedness, and conclude that none know it but themselves, till conscience condemns them ; and then they conclude that “ God hath found out their iniquity.” But let none be deceived ; for God sees and knows all our thoughts, words and actions, full as well as we do ourselves.

He had not just then found out the iniquity of the sons of Jacob ; but he knew it when they sold their brother, and even attempted to kill him ; and then deceived their father with a lie : though they now, in their extremity, both by troubles without, and conscience within, concluded that he had just then found out their iniquity.

Let all take warning, and keep innocency and virtue on their side ; and then conscience will speak peace. Then,

“ Though troubles assaii,
And dangers affright ;
Though friends should all fail,
And foes all unite :

Yet one thing is certain,
 Whatever betide,
 The Lord is their portion;
 He's firm on their side.

Let Satan then rage,
 And pierce with his darts,
 The Lord will engage
 To heal all his smarts.

His true humble ones
 He'll keep from all harm,
 Their peace shall be sure,
 And free from alarm.

When life sinks apace,
 And death is in view,
 The word of his grace
 Shall comfort us through.

No fearing or doubting,
 With Christ on our side;
 We hope to die shouting,
 The Lord will provide.”*

As he did for Jacob and his sons.

When Joseph's brethren were self-condemned; being fully convinced that “their

iniquity was discovered, and their sins were not hid ;” they acknowledged that they were Joseph’s servants. But he said, “ God forbid that I should do so : but the man, in whose hand, (or with whom) the cup is found, he shall be my servant : and as for” the rest of “you, go in peace unto your father.”

Now what is to be done ! they dare not go to their Father without Benjamin ; and Joseph proposes keeping him as a servant. Me-thinks they may truly say, “ whose sorrow is like unto our sorrow ?” Surely now the cup of their sufferings is nearly filled up ; and the Lord will shortly “ stay his hand, and say, it is enough.”

Thus he tries his people, with one affliction after another, till he humbles them sufficiently, by severe chastisements ; and brings them into a narrow place, where they cannot turn, either to the right hand, or to the left. Yet, in the midst of judgment, he remembers mercy. Though his chastisements are severe, he has blessings in store for those who are truly humble, and acknowledge their trans-

gressions with sincere repentance. And when their sufferings seem to be at the highest, and they see no way to escape, or go forwards, but are ready to wish for death rather than life ; then is the Lord's time to bless them, and to make his power known.

The day will soon break, and the shadows of the night flee away ; and “ though sorrow continueth for a night, joy cometh in the morning.” This morning is now near approaching with these sons of Jacob, after a suffering night.

They are now brought into a great strait. They cannot think of going home without Benjamin ; and to stay will not do, considering the suffering state of their families, on account of the famine. Therefore Judah, (who was most interested in taking Benjamin home, having become security to his father for his safe return) broke out, in the bitterness of his soul, thus : “ Oh ! my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears ; and let not thine anger burn against thy servant : for thou art even as Pha-

raoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man, and (he has) a child of his old age, a little one: and his brother is dead: (meaning Joseph, with whom they were then talking: and they had no reason to suppose that he was dead, because they sold him to be carried to Egypt as a slave) and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

“ And thou saidst unto thy servants bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, the lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

“ And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord.

“ And our father said, go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, we cannot go

down. If our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.

“ And thy servant, my father, said unto us, ye know that my wife bear me two sons. And the one went out from me; and I said, surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since; (meaning Joseph) and if ye take this also from me (meaning Benjamin) and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

“ Now therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us: seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servant shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave.

“ For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, if I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever.

“ Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For, how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.”

At this affecting relation, Joseph could refrain no longer; but his affectionate and tender feelings were overcome through sympathy for his tried brethren. And as the purpose of God through him was now accomplished as it respects their humility; his heart was too full to be suppressed; and he was obliged to give it vent.

He therefore commanded all the Egyptians present to leave him, while he made himself known to his brethren; that none but themselves might be witness to this affecting scene.

He then burst out into a flood of tears, and wept aloud.

And when his tears subsided, and he had power to speak, he addressed himself to them,

thus: "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?"

This unexpected news, no doubt, struck them with great surprise; so that they were dumb before him, and "could not answer him," (or speak to him) "for they were troubled at his presence."

Their trouble, or surprise, might be two fold. No doubt they were pleased with the discovery: that, instead of being in the power of a tyrant; as, likely they supposed; to find themselves in the presence of their brother, who had long been separated from them; very likely occasioned great joy. And on the other hand, perhaps their former treatment of him came fresh into their minds; and a dread seized them, with an apprehension that as he now had the power, he might take the advantage to be revenged on them; and that their troubles were but beginning. But we will hope that the first consideration bore with the greatest weight on their minds, as they were witnesses of his great affection for them by his

tears. Nevertheless it may not be amiss to reflect a little on their situation.

Though their brother appeared to be overjoyed at meeting with them, and they had every reason to suppose that he intended to treat them kindly: and to put an end to their former troubles; and that they might be happy in his presence; yet methinks, their was a sting at heart; conscience could not rest: remorse took place of pleasure; and uneasy reflections banished those pleasing sensations which must otherwise have taken place in the mind on this joyful occasion.

This, I apprehend is the case with many more: they go on sinning without controul, stifling conviction of conscience, and even seem to prosper in their evil ways, till trouble comes, and takes place of pleasure: then conscience starts up and condemns them. Then, though at times they might take real comfort and pleasure on certain occasions; yet, like Joseph's brethren, their happiness is interrupted by uneasy reflections on their past conduct.

Therefore keep innocency, and do the thing that is right ; for that, and that alone, will bring true peace.

Joseph, in order to comfort his brethren ; and to cheer their troubled minds, addressed them with the most kind and gentle expressions ; saying, " come near to me, I pray you ;" and when they drew near, he said ; " I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

" Now therefore be not grieved that ye sold me : for it was not you that sent me hither ; but God did send me before you to preserve life. And he has made me as a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

Behold in this instance, a true christian spirit of forgiveness. Here is no malice, no hatred, no spirit of revenge, nor even reproof, for all their hatred, and cruel treatment of him ; but instead thereof, a true brotherly affection, and hearty forgiveness of all injuries.

If, on their first appearance in Egypt, and the recollection of their former crimes, he had

let the creaturely passions prevail so far as to have resented their conduct, perhaps it would have strengthened that envious spirit, with which they appeared, formerly, to be possessed ; and would, probably, have met with a similar return ; whereby, instead of gaining them he might have lost them for ever. But by his mild and gentle behaviour, and tender affection for them, behold how he softened that ferocious disposition which possessed their minds : and from that of lions, reduced them to the state of lambs ; their minds being first humbled, by great and repeated trials.

Kind treatment often does more good, and affects the heart more sensibly, than severity or reproof.

It is natural to suppose that they would reflect upon themselves, thus : What have we done ! have we sold for a slave, a brother so kind, so generous, so excellent as this ! How little did we know of him when we treated him so cruelly ; and how rashly did we judge of his true character, and of his words which

gave us so much offence ! He was better than we, though we hardly thought him fit to live.

Let this be a warning to all, how we speak evil of any, or treat them unkindly without a correct knowledge of their real character ; and not be offended, because they have said or done something which touches our pride, or wounds our feelings ; for they may be in the way of their duty, and of doing us an unspeakable kindness ; as Joseph was toward his brethren : and we, by resenting their labours of love may be in the way to destruction.

Let us all, like Joseph, strive to be possessed of such a kind, affectionate, and forbearing disposition.



CHAPTER VIII.

JOSEPH, having discovered himself to his brethren, is now impatient to see his father in Egypt.

“Haste ye,” says he, “and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me; tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and shalt be near unto me; thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children; and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for there are yet to come five years of famine.

“And Joseph kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; (but particularly Benjamin) and after that (having a little recovered from their first emotions of joy and wonder) they talked with him.”

The news soon reached the ears of Pharaoh; and it pleased him, to hear that Joseph’s brethren had come to Egypt. And he charged Joseph to supply them with provisions, as much as their beasts could carry; and also with waggons to bring their father, and their wives and children, to Egypt: but desired them not to mind their stuff, that is, their property which they had in Canaan; “for,”

saith he, “the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.”

It is mentioned in scripture, that when Joseph entertained his brethren at his own table, some of the Egyptians dined with them; but they ate by themselves, because the Egyptians counted it an abomination to eat with the Hebrews; by which it appears that the Hebrews were lightly esteemed by them.

What, then, was the cause of Pharaoh's remarkable kindness to Joseph's father and brethren? It might be, in part, owing to his good will towards Joseph, on account of his services in favour of the Egyptians; but we must ascribe it, principally, to the goodness of God, in influencing the heart of Pharaoh, in favour of Jacob (or Israel) who sat out in his youth, with full purpose of heart, to serve the Lord; and said, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, (or should go) and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on: then shall the Lord be my God.” And at the same time, he made a solemn promise, that of all the good

things of this life, which the Lord should be pleased to favour him with, he would return one-tenth part to him again : or that it should be at the Lord's disposal, for charitable purposes, or otherways.

Surely all who are thus disposed, and faithful, like Jacob, would be blessed in basket and in store ; in the house, and in the field, as he was.

But how many are there, in this day of gospel light, who are favoured with abundance ; and who care for nothing, but to satisfy their own selfish desires ; and never consider from whence all good comes, neither are thankful, nor willing to return unto the Lord, any part of his bounties. How can such expect the continuation of his favours !

Or, if they should be favoured through this life, as the rich man in the parable was ; they must not expect to be blessed in the next ; but such as Lazarus, the poor beggar, whom the rich man despised, as not worthy of the crumbs which fell from his table, will take their crowns.

Joseph did as Pharaoh commanded ; and furnished his brethren with waggons, and provisions for the journey : and to each of them he gave changes of raiment ; but to his dear brother Benjamin, as a mark of particular respect, he gave five changes of raiment, and three hundred pieces of silver. Besides which, he sent a large present to his father of the good things of Egypt ; and of provisions for him and his family by the way.

Being thus furnished, Joseph's brethren sat out for Canaan ; having first received a charge from Joseph, not to fall out, or quarrel by the way.

By which we may judge that Joseph was still suspicious of them, that they were not sufficiently humble, notwithstanding the many humiliations, and trials, which they had met with.

When once people give up to follow the devices of Satan, and thereby to commit acts of wickedness ; how hard it is to soften their stony hearts !

This is the cause of a great part, if not all the troubles that we meet with. Trials are permitted by our gracious and merciful Redeemer, as gentle corrections, to turn us from our evil ways ; and when light afflictions will not soften our hard and rebellious hearts, and turn them from enmity to love, and from Satan unto God, heavier ones must be laid upon us.

We might suppose that Joseph's brethren had met with sufficient to humble them : first their heavy trials ; and then Joseph's endeared love for them, and hearty forgiveness of all injuries which they had done him ; with a promise to support them and their families in Egypt : which was confirmed by presents before they set out, and all necessary supplies for their journey till they returned.

Who would suppose, that after all this, they would need such a caution, "not to fall out by the way !" And yet, I doubt not, but that the caution was very necessary for them and so it is for us, not to fall out with each other as we journey through life.

When they arrived, they told their father that Joseph was still alive, and that he was governor over all Egypt.

This was unexpected, and strange news to Jacob ; and such as staggered his faith ; though if it had been reported by those in whom he could have placed confidence, he would have had no room to doubt ; but as, formerly they had given him reason to suppose that Joseph was killed by a wild beast, and as proof thereof, produced his bloody coat, and now reporting him to be alive, their father knew that two such contradictory reports, could not both be true ; and as the first had proof, so far as his bloody coat would serve, he was inclined to give that the most credit ; therefore "he believed them not," now ; confirming the maxim, that a liar is not to be believed, though he should speak the truth.

Oh ! what a dreadful thing is a false tongue ! It is a sin of a deep die ; and lays us under many disadvantages, even in this life.

But when Jacob saw the waggons which Joseph sent to carry him to Egypt, he said, “it is enough ; Joseph, my son, is yet alive : I will go and see him before I die.”

“ And Israel took his journey, with all that he had ; till he came to Beersheba ; and there he offered sacrifices unto God.” And the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and encouraged him to go to Egypt ; promising to make of him there (or of his posterity) a great nation.

And Jacob journeyed forward, with his sons, and their families ; amounting in all, to seventy souls, beside his sons’ wives.

“ And Joseph went in his chariot to meet his father ;” but the pleasure of the interview between such an affectionate parent, and such a dutiful son, is not to be described. “ And Joseph fell on his father’s neck, and wept on his neck a-good-while.

“ And Jacob said unto Joseph, now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.” As much as to say, I desire no more in this world. I have been favoured

with every thing that I could desire, except to have thee with me : but the prospect of thy being dead, occasioned me much trouble of mind ; but now since I have seen thee, and thou art yet alive, I am ready to depart ; I am done with this world.



CHAPTER IX.

JOSEPH married Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, a priest, in Egypt ; by whom he had two sons, namely : Manassah and Ephraim.

Joseph informed Pharaoh that his father and brethren, with their families, were come unto him : and that they were herdsmen and shepherds ; by which means he obtained a settlement for them in Goshen ; which was the best part of the country, and, I suppose, separate from the Egyptian settlements, because every shepherd was an abomination unto the Egyptians. But Pharaoh treated them very kindly ; and said to Joseph, “ the land of Egypt is before thee : in the best of the land let thy father and brethren dwell.”

“ And Joseph presented his father before Pharaoh : and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And upon Pharaoh’s enquiring of Jacob how old he was, he answered, “ the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years : few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.”

If Jacob had cause thus to charge himself, who was so divinely favoured, what account can we give of the hope that is in us ?

The famine was sore in the land, and the people cried unto Joseph for bread : and when he had gathered all the money that was in Egypt and Canaan, the people bartered their horses and cattle, and then their lands, for food ; so that all the possessions of Egypt became Pharaoh’s ; and the people acknowledged themselves to be his servants.

Joseph then gave them seed to till the ground ; and made it a standing law, that one-fifth part of the increase should be Pharaoh’s.

The Israelites gained possessions in Egypt, and they grew and multiplied exceedingly. And Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years.

And after obtaining a promise from Joseph, that he would not bury him in Egypt, but carry him to the burying place of his fathers, he died, being an hundred and forty-seven years old.

A little before his death, he desired Joseph to bring his two sons to him, that he might bless them; and he said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk; the God which fed me all my life long unto this day; the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," &c. After which he blessed all his own sons, separately; and prophesied what should befall their posterity, in the latter days. (See the 49th chapter of Genesis.)

Joseph's brethren, after their father's death, were still troubled with guilty consciences, and fears, lest Joseph should hate them, and be revenged upon them for "all the evil which they did unto him."

And they sent a messenger unto him, saying, "forgive, I pray thee, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin: for they did unto thee evil."

They judged of him by their own hateful dispositions : but Joseph detested such a disposition ; as all do, who, like him, “ fear God,” and was grieved to find that they entertained such jealousies and fears respecting him. And he wept.

“ And his brethren went themselves also, and fell down before his face ; saying, behold, we are thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, fear not : for am I in the place of God ?” Here is a great lesson of instruction ; shewing us, that we, as men and creatures, have no right to judge any ; for all judgment belongs to God.

Joseph allowed that he had no right to judge, or censure them ; but was willing to leave them in the hands of the Lord, to whom all judgment belongs. “ But as for you,” said he, “ ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good ; to bring to pass, as it is this day ; to save much people alive.

“ Now therefore fear ye not ; I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.”

And Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old ; after he had informed his brethren, that God would visit them, and bring them out of Egypt, into Canaan ; the land which he promised to Abraham, and his posterity.

What sentiments of piety and goodness arise in the heart upon considering the character of Joseph ! He lived in the fear of God, and was supported by his presence ; whereby he was enabled to be patient under affliction ; honest and just in his stewardship ; resisting temptation, and fleeing from it ; rising from the lowest scene of disgrace and misery to the highest dignity ; providing for the wants of the people ; cherishing a spirit of forgiveness and brotherly love under the greatest injuries ; and pouring plenty and comfort into the breast of his aged father.

Agreeably to a former proposition,* I shall now attempt to give my readers a faint idea of the resemblance of the life of Joseph with

* See page 64.

that of Christ. And though such resemblances should not be made too common, yet they may be prudently used, to direct the eye and heart to Christ, who came as “a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel.”

As John the baptist was the forerunner of Christ, to prepare his way in the hearts of the people; so Joseph went before him as a shining light, and an exact pattern of a real Christian.

Christ obeyed his parents, when a youth: to set us an example of filial obedience. So did Joseph, though without the advantage of such an example.

Christ was despised by his brethren, according to the flesh: and sold by one who professed to be his immediate follower: so Joseph was hated and sold by his brethren.

Christ was tempted of the Devil to sin; but reigned triumphant over all his stratagems: so Joseph was tempted by the same spirit, to “sin against God;” but came off victorious, and preserved his integrity.

We are by nature, children of wrath ; and subject, like Joseph's brethren, to the tyranical government of unruly passions : but before we can become real Christians, and receive Christ in the way which we ought, we must be humbled, as they were before they could receive Joseph in a true Christian spirit of love and humility.

To effect this humility we are often tried, and proved ; and brought into such a strait, that we see no way to escape : so it was necessary that Joseph's brethren should be tried and humbled, that their lion-like spirits might be brought down, and the innocent, harmless disposition of the lamb substituted instead thereof. When this is effected in us, we shall experience forgiveness, and a blessing to be added, as they did.

Christ was falsely accused, crucified and buried in a sepulchre, a place similar to a dungeon, and rose again triumphant, to rule and reign over all his enemies : So Joseph was falsely accused, cast into the dungeon, and as it were buried alive ; but rose again to rule

over Egypt, and to reign over the malice of all those who hated him.

Christ was buffeted, and scornfully used ; but bore all patiently ; loving and pitying those who thus treated him : So Joseph was despised and afflicted ; but was patient and resigned through all ; loving and pitying the instruments thereof.

Christ fed the multitudes who flocked unto him, out of his never failing storehouse : So Joseph fed the multitudes who came unto him, out of the plentiful storehouses of Egypt.

And as all who hunger after that bread which alone can nourish the soul unto everlasting life, must, if they expect to be fed, come to Christ : so, many in that day, were obliged to apply to Joseph for bread to nourish their mortal bodies.

And as Christ was a glorious example of love to all, and forgiveness of injuries ; so, Joseph cherished a spirit of brotherly love, and hearty forgiveness of those who had spitefully treated him.

Read, and blush, oh nominal christian ! at beholding in an Hebrew, (without scripture for instruction, without Christ for example, and without parents or friends for council and comfort) a true pattern of christianity.



OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

I have heard an objection, and likely the same will arise in the minds of others, against the form of reasoning in the foregoing story : that Joseph's brethren ought not to be charged with improper conduct, respecting the treatment of their brother ; because it was so ordered by and agreeable to the will of the Almighty : and that they were abundantly favoured and blessed of him.

Which is fully admitted, that it was so ordered, as Joseph expressed to his brethren : “ Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither ; for it was not you that sent me hither, but God did send me before you to preserve life :” but yet we cannot

admit that God is the author of evil, that good may be produced by it.

And agreeably to their own expressions, they were guilty of great impiety, and evil conduct. For when Joseph demanded a proof of their sincerity, that they were true men and no spies ; “ they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.”

Their consciences were troubled and their treatment of their brother immediately arose as a strong witness against them. And Reuben said unto them ; “spake I not unto you saying, do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear ? therefore, behold his blood is required.”

By which we find, that in the first instance they allowed that the distress which had come upon them was occasioned by their cruel treatment of their brother ; and in the last, Reuben counted it a sin ; and that in consequence of it, his blood was then charged to them ;

though the sin was committed about twenty years before.

And on their return home, when they found the money which they thought they had left in Egypt, "they were afraid ; and said, what is this that God hath done unto us?" Here conscience starts up, and brings to mind their former sin.

Innocency, and a clear conscience, are always attended with peace and safety to their possessors. If they be terrified with the cruel conduct of men, they have peace with God : but those wicked men concluded the judgment of God was coming upon them, at every little circumstance which seemed to threaten danger. For when they were accused by Joseph as thieves, for stealing his silver cup ; they said "God had found out their iniquity." What iniquity ? Not of stealing the cup, because of that charge they were clear ; but of the evil conduct treated of in the preceding story.

I hope what has been said, will be considered as a sufficient proof against such an objection.

If it should be further objected, that Jacob, who had no hand in selling Joseph, on beholding the money which his sons brought back from Egypt, united with them in fearful apprehensions : I answer, that his fears were of another nature. He had lost Joseph, he knew not how ; Simeon was detained in Egypt ; for what cause he knew not ; and they wanted to take Benjamin away, and probably would leave him behind.

These were the causes of Jacob's fears ; as he said : " Me have ye bereaved of my children ; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away ; all these things are against me." And then gave them a positive denial ; saying, " My son shall not go down with you ; for his brother is dead, and if mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." No wonder then that he was troubled : but his son's trouble was of a more serious nature.

If it should be objected, that they were objects of divine regard, and mercifully favour-

ed after this time of trouble, I answer, that is no proof that they were clear of the crime laid to their charge ; for no crime is too great for the Lord to pardon, on sincere repentance ; for he said, “ though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow ; and though they be as crimson, I will make them as wool ;” on conditions of repentance, and amendment of life. And it is very likely Joseph’s brethren repented ; for they seemed to be very sensible of their faults, and humble ; and, no doubt, obtained forgiveness.

End of the Story of Joseph and his Brethren.

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I apprehend the dignity of the preceding story will not be lessened, by the insertion of the following very instructive account of "Patient Joe; or the Newcastle Collier."

PATIENT JOE ;
OR THE
NEWCASTLE COLLIER.



FRANKFORD, PENN.
PUBLISHED BY JOSEPH SHARPLESS.
1812.



PATIENT JOE;

OR THE

NEWCASTLE COLLIER.

Have you heard of a Collier of honest renown,
Who dwelt on the borders of Newcastle town?
His name it was Joseph—you better may know
If I tell you he always was called patient Joe.
Whatever betided he thought it was right,
And Providence still he kept ever in sight;
To those who love God, let things turn as they would
He was certain that all work'd together for good.
He prais'd his Creator whatever befell;
How thankful was Joseph when matters went well!
How sincere were his carols of praise for good health,
And how grateful for any increase in his wealth!
In trouble he bow'd him to God's holy will;
How contented was Joseph when matters went ill!
When rich and when poor he alike understood
That all things together were working for good.
If the land was afflicted with war, he declar'd
'Twas a needful correction for sins which be shar'd;
And when merciful Heaven bid slaughter to cease,
How thankful was Joe for the blessing of peace!

When taxes ran high, and provisions were dear,
 Still Joseph declared he had nothing to fear;
 It was but a trial he well understood,
 From Him who made all work together for good.
 Tho' his wife was but sickly his gettings but small,
 A mind so submissive prepar'd him for all;
 He liv'd on his gains were they greater or less,
 And the giver he ceas'd not each moment to bless.
 When another child came he receiv'd him with joy,
 And Providence bless'd who had sent him a boy;
 But when the child died—said poor Joe I'm content,
 For God had a right to recall what he lent.
 It was Joseph's ill fortune to work in a pit
 With some who believ'd that profaneness was wit;
 When disasters befell him much pleasure they shew'd,
 And laugh'd and said—' Joseph will this work for good.
 But ever when these would profanely advance
 That *this* happen'd by luck, and *that* happen'd by chance,
 Still Joseph insisted no chance could be found,
 Not a sparrow by accident falls to the ground.
 Among his companions who work'd in the pit,
 And made him the butt of their profligate wit,
 Was idle Tim Jenkins, who drank and who gam'd,
 Who mock'd at his Bible and was not ashamed.
 One day at the pit his old comrades he found,
 And they chatted preparing to go under ground;
 Tim Jenkins, as usual, was turning to jest,
 Joe's notion—that all things which happened were best.

As Joe on the ground had unthinkingly laid
 His provision for dinner of bacon and bread,
 A dog on the watch seiz'd the bread and the meat,
 And off with his prey ran with footsteps so fleet.
 Now to see the delight that Tim Jenkins exprest !
 ' Is the loss of thy dinner too, Joe, for the best ?'
 ' No doubt on't,' said Joe, ' but as I must eat,
 ' 'Tis my duty to try to recover my meat.'
 So saying, he followed the dog a long round,
 While Tim laughing and swearing went down under
 ground ;
 Poor Joe soon return'd, though his bacon was lost,
 For the dog a good dinner had made at his cost.
 When Joseph came back, he expected a sneer,
 But the face of each collier spoke horror and fear ;
 ' What a narrow escape hast thou had,' they all said,
 ' The pit is fall'n in, and Tim Jenkins is dead !'
 How sincere was the gratitude Joseph express'd !
 How warm the compassion which glow'd in his breast !
 Thus events great and small, if aright understood,
 Will be found to be working together for good.
 ' When my meat,' Joseph cry'd, ' was just now stol'n
 away,
 And I had no prospect of eating to-day,
 How could it appear to a short-sighted sinner,
 That my life would be sav'd by the loss of my dinner ?'

FINIS.









